**DON’T BE AFRAID OF THEM**

Nehemiah 4:1-23

Key Verse 14

 After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”

**Introduction**



 How nice it would be if they finished the rebuilding project without any opposition. But God’s people must know that there is no smooth ride in God’s work because Satan also works very hard to oppose it. Whenever the people of God say, “Let us arise and rebuild!” the devil arise without fail. May the Lord help us to be aware of this well so that we may be ready servants for the glory of God. May the Lord help each of us to learn of how to fight a good fight for the glory of God and how to continue working for the Lord at the difficult times.

1. Read verses 1-9. What growing opposition did the people face as they were building the wall? (1-3, 7-8) How did Nehemiah and his people respond? (4-5, 6, 9)

1-1, Read verses 1-9.

 When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, **2** and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, “What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?” **3** Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, “What they are building—even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!” **4** Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. **5** Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of[[b](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=nehemiah+4&version=NIV#fen-NIV-12365b)] the builders. **6** So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart. **7** But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem’s walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. **8** They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it. **9** But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.

1-2, What growing opposition did they face as the people were building the wall? (1-3, 7-8)



 ***When Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, he became angry and was greatly incensed. He ridiculed the Jews, 2 and in the presence of his associates and the army of Samaria, he said, “What are those feeble Jews doing? Will they restore their wall? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they finish in a day? Can they bring the stones back to life from those heaps of rubble—burned as they are?” 3 Tobiah the Ammonite, who was at his side, said, “What they are building—even a fox climbing up on it would break down their wall of stones!”***

***7 But when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the people of Ashdod heard that the repairs to Jerusalem’s walls had gone ahead and that the gaps were being closed, they were very angry. 8 They all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and stir up trouble against it.***

* Sanballat and Tobiah were first deeply disturbed when they heard a man wanted to help the people of Jerusalem (2:10). Then they used scorn and intimidation to prevent the work from starting (2:19). Now that the work had begun, they were furious and very indignant.
* So there is a progression of their opposition and at this chapter they meant business to oppose Nehemiah violently.
* Jerusalem was surrounded by the enemies: Sanballat and the Samaritans on the north, Ashdod on the west, Tobiah and the Ammonites on the east and the Arabs to the south. These enemies plotted to come and fight against Jerusalem. They wanted to stir up trouble against Jerusalem to make the Jews give up.
* ‘Discouragement’ is such a powerful weapon because it is somewhat the opposite of faith. Our enemy used discouragement so that we may easily forget about who God is and what He has promised to do.

1-3, How did Nehemiah and his people respond? (4-5, 6, 9)

***4 Hear us, our God, for we are despised. Turn their insults back on their own heads. Give them over as plunder in a land of captivity. 5 Do not cover up their guilt or blot out their sins from your sight, for they have thrown insults in the face of the builders.***

***6 So we rebuilt the wall till all of it reached half its height, for the people worked with all their heart.***

***9 But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat.***

* Nehemiah regarded this ridicule as an insult against God himself. He didn’t argue with them or strike them back. He came to God and prayed, believing that God would fight against them. Nehemiah showed his personal faith that when conflict comes and fear strikes, it is time to pray.

Matthew 5:11 reads,

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.

* After entrusting his enemies to God in prayer, Nehemiah and God’s people kept on rebuilding the wall.
* They worked with all their hearts. Then they reached half its height in the entire wall. We must know that God’s vision and his works are always under Satan’s attack.
* Anyone who is trying to do something for God will face opposition. Jesus was constantly attacked by all kinds of people throughout his messianic ministry.
* So we have to expect to be criticized and attacked. And we must pray when attacked and criticized, and we must keep doing God’s work faithfully with all our hearts. Jesus points in Matthew 5 that his people will be persecuted.
* Also Nehemiah prayed together with his people. He must have asked them to join in prayer humbly. Again he was an effective leader to cowork with others in relying on God in prayer. He then posted a guard in the right place and time.

2. Read verses 10-15. How did the opposition and other problems increase? (10-12) How did Nehemiah strengthen and encourage the people? (13-14) What was the result of their prayer (15)?

2-1, Read verses 10-15.

Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, “The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall.”

**11** Also our enemies said, “Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work.”

**12** Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, “Wherever you turn, they will attack us.”

**13** Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows. **14** After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”

**15** When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to our own work.

2-2, How did the opposition and other problems increase? (10-12)

***10 Meanwhile, the people in Judah said, “The strength of the laborers is giving out, and there is so much rubble that we cannot rebuild the wall.”***

***11 Also our enemies said, “Before they know it or see us, we will be right there among them and will kill them and put an end to the work.”***

***12 Then the Jews who lived near them came and told us ten times over, “Wherever you turn, they will attack us.”***

* Now the Jewish builders were feeling weaker and fearful. Moreover, they saw that they still had tremendous works to do. How difficult and strenuous might have it been for them to clear so much rubble abandoned for a century!
* God’s vision disappeared and fear and fatigue occupied their hearts. Then they began to say, “We cannot rebuild the wall.”
* They heard that their enemies would kill them and put an end to the work. They heard from their enemies saying ten times over, “Whenever you turn, they will attack us!” They were distracted and paralyzed by fear.
* Satan discouraged them to give up the work of God. Discouragement is like a highly contagious disease. People can be disheartened when they see others discouraged. They almost reached the point to give up rebuilding the wall.

2-3, How did Nehemiah strengthen and encourage the people? (13-14)

***13 Therefore I stationed some of the people behind the lowest points of the wall at the exposed places, posting them by families, with their swords, spears and bows. 14 After I looked things over, I stood up and said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “Don’t be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your families, your sons and your daughters, your wives and your homes.”***

* Nehemiah first stationed some people and fortified the city’s defenses. To Nehemiah, his people’s fear, fatigue and discouragement were more serious than the enemies’ threat.
* So he planted faith in the hearts of people with words of encouragement. Nehemiah himself experienced God’s might work that God moved King Artaxerxes who sent him to Jerusalem to build the wall.
* Nehemiah believed in the living God, the great and awesome God. Nehemiah believed that God who started the work would surely finish it.
* He believed that God would fight for him. Therefore he could plant faith in the hearts of the people.
* They need to remember God who is great and awesome. They need to remember God who fights for them. They need to remember God who called them out of darkness and brought them into his wonderful light.
* It was God who gave them new life and the mission to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem. Remember God who fights for us. They need to fix their eyes on God.

2-4, What was the result of their prayer (15)?

 ***When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and that God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to our own work.***

* They all returned to the wall, each to his own work. They kept on doing the work of God.
* They recovered God’s vision and courage in their hearts. They kept on building the wall.
* When we are under spiritual attack it is easy to feel that just enduring the storm is the victory. It isn't.
* The attack often comes to prevent your progress and work for the LORD. Victory is enduring the attack and continuing the progress and work for the LORD.

Hebrew 10:38, 39 and 12:1-3 reads,

 And, “But my righteous one will live by faith. And I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.” 39 But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved.

 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, 2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.

3. Read verses 16-23. What was their new strategy in continuing building? (16-18) How was Nehemiah a good shepherd for all the workers? (19-23)

3-1, Read verses 16-23.

From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah **17** who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, **18** and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.

**19** Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. **20** Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!”

**21** So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out. **22** At that time I also said to the people, “Have every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night, so they can serve us as guards by night and as workers by day.” **23** Neither I nor my brothers nor my men nor the guards with me took off our clothes; each had his weapon, even when he went for water.

3-2, What was their new strategy in continuing building? (16-18)

 ***From that day on, half of my men did the work, while the other half were equipped with spears, shields, bows and armor. The officers posted themselves behind all the people of Judah 17 who were building the wall. Those who carried materials did their work with one hand and held a weapon in the other, 18 and each of the builders wore his sword at his side as he worked. But the man who sounded the trumpet stayed with me.***

* It must have been very hard working with one hand and the other holding weapon. They were not trained soldiers but ordinary civilians. But by faith in God, they became builders and at the same time soldiers to restoring the city of Jerusalem.
* Likewise God has blessed us richly as self supporting believers in serving campus mission as well as world mission in our own generation. Oftenly we were opposed by our enemies but God did not give us timidity but the spirit of self discipline, love and power through our Lord Jesus who raised from the death.
* But often times Satan discourages and threatens us to give it up. When we are discouraged by busy work, school study, taking care of children, we are tempted to stop the work of God.
* But Nehemiah encourages us to hold the Bible on one hand, and our job or school study on the other.
* That is why God created each of us with two hands. One is a working hand, the other a fighting hand. Maybe one mouth was given to utter believing words instead of negative words or complaints.
* We should serve God with our two hands thankfully. We serve God with all our hearts and minds and great thanks by absolute faith!

3-3, How was Nehemiah a good shepherd for all the workers? (19-23)

 ***Then I said to the nobles, the officials and the rest of the people, “The work is extensive and spread out, and we are widely separated from each other along the wall. 20 Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us!” 21 So we continued the work with half the men holding spears, from the first light of dawn till the stars came out. 22 At that time I also said to the people, “Have every man and his helper stay inside Jerusalem at night, so they can serve us as guards by night and as workers by day.” 23 Neither I nor my brothers nor my men nor the guards with me took off our clothes; each had his weapon, even when he went for water.***

* They worked from early morning until night fall. By night they served as guards, staying in Jerusalem. By day, they served as workmen. Even they did not have time to change their clothes and take off their weapons. What a fighting spirit!
* As Christians, we are both builders and soldiers. We must be competent to handle our building tool which is our school study or job in one hand, our sword of the word of God in the other hand.
* Particularly we should have our swords by our sides at all times, the word of God, and be ready to use it at any moment.
* There is no excuse for not knowing God’s word. We must read the word of God, study it, memorize it, write a reflection over it and live according to it in our daily lives. In this way we are growing as independent Bible teachers qualified to use God’s words.

**Conclusion**

 May the Lord help us to participate in the rebuilding work of His church. It is God’s work that God started and one day will surely complete it. May we be willing to join this divine work, ready to fight against Satan’s attack, remembering our great awesome God who fights for us. Praise the Lord our God! Amen.

**One word: Continue to work and fight for God’s glory!**